

# SECOND CORINTHIANS

## Chapter 5

### *Our Heavenly Dwelling*

**For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.**

**5:1 for** – In the Greek it is “gar” and “for” in English. It suggests a looking ahead and anticipating great things in the future.

Paul changes the picture, broadening it somewhat, but he is still talking about the same subject. He has been using the illustration of jars of clay to picture the outer man. He switches now to the picture of a tent that has been set up here on earth. (PBC)

*know* – eido To be aware of through sight or perception; to understand and have full confidence based on what we know. Also used in 2 Corinthians 4:14. Other passages that echo this are below. (QV)

Job 19:25 “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.”

John 4:41-42 “And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Romans 8:28 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”

2 Timothy 1:12 “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.”

1 John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears.”

1 John 3:14 “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

*tent that is our earthly home.* Our present body (see 2Pe 1:13). As a tent is a temporary and flimsy abode, so our bodies are frail, vulnerable and wasting away (4:10–12, 16). (CSB)

The temporal body. (TLSB)

skanous – The earthly house of the tent. Paul sees the death and life of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10-11) already at work, transforming the people of God by the power and grace of his Spirit, anticipating the final resurrection. Second Peter 1:13-14 has a similar word which describes our body as temporary, insecure, and transient. The figure of a tent also suggests a comparison to God’s OT people who lived in tents while traveling in the wilderness before they reached the Promised Land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

*destroyed* – katalutha – To dismantle. Paul is so sure of this future change that he expresses it in the present tense: “we have” this spiritual body waiting. Furthermore, he does not just say that we hope or believe, but that “we know” of the pending change. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

*a building from God...eternal in the heavens.* A solid structure—permanent, not temporary. This is one of the eternal realities that are as yet unseen (4:18). (CSB)

A permanent dwelling. The resurrected body is redeemed for eternity, restored and transformed by God Himself (cf 1Co 15; 1Jn 3:2). (TLSB)

Something that goes on forever. A house is not something you assemble and tear down each day like a tent. It also gives much more protection in bad weather. Some glimpses of heaven follow in the verses below.

He does not use here the Greek word that means knowing by personal experience, for he has not yet left this tent-house for the eternal house in heaven. Paul knows, he is certain, that an eternal house in heaven awaits him because that is what God has said. So true and certain, in fact is this promise of God that Paul can use a present tense verb, “we have a building from God,” even though he has not yet left the tent-house of his earthly existence. That is how reliable God’s promises are. If God says it, God’s children have it. (PBC)

Matthew 6:19-20 ““Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal”

Luke 10:20 “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

John 14:1-3 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a

place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Acts 7:55 “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

Hebrews 11:10 “For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

Revelation 7:9 “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

*not made with hands.* The work of God, and therefore perfect and permanent (see Heb 9:11). (CSB)

*acheiro – poiaton* – To indicate its divine and heavenly workmanship. It is not of this creation but supernatural, spiritual, and of eternal durability. It is significant that Christ uses this word-pair to describe the handmade Jerusalem temple, which would be torn down, and his own body, which would also be “torn down” but then raised again as an eternal temple not made by human hands (Mk 14:58; cf. also Acts 7:48; Heb 9:11, 24). Our bodies too are temples of God (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). Like the Jerusalem temple in Christ’s prophecy, our bodies will be “torn down:” and replaced with lasting temples similar to Christ’s resurrection body. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

**5:2** *for this.* As we await the Lord’s return. (CSB)

*we groan.* Because we long for the perfection that will be ours when we put on the glorious spiritual body (cf. 1Co 15:42–49). (CSB)

*stenazo* To be in dire straits and sighing for something much better. We know how sin negatively impacts our life on this side of heaven and long for heaven where these imperfections will not trouble us. (QV)

*stenazo* – We groan because of the hardship of this present life. It is repeated in verse 4. In Romans 8:23 Paul uses it to describe the groans of those who desire to be free from the afflictions and imperfections of this present life and to be clothed in a glorious, spiritual body. The present tense indicates daily groaning. The suffering that causes our groaning does have a positive benefit in that it increases our longing hope for our heavenly dwelling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

*clothed with our heavenly dwelling.* The eternal dwelling provided by God is pictured as something the Christian puts on like a garment. (CSB)

*ependuomai* To be invested in something. In this case it is God who invested in us and has clothed us in a robe of righteousness as the verses below indicate. (QV)

ependumai – Meaning to put on. It is also used in 1 Cor. 15:53-54. This clotting metaphor is also used for the rich concepts of being clothes with Christ (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27), being clothed with power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49), putting on the new man (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), and putting on various Christian virtues (Col. 3:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

Job 29:14 “I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.”

Isaiah 61:10 “I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

Zechariah 3:4 ” The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

Luke 15:22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.’”

**5:3** At the point of death, when the tent dwelling literally fades away, the cloak of God’s eternal dwelling is sure for all those who trust in Him. (TLSB)

*naked.* Without the clothing of a body, which is the state of those whose earthly tent-dwelling has been dismantled by death. (CSB)

After death, Christians “will not be found naked” since we will not forever remain disembodied spirits. At Christ’s return we will be clothed with our resurrected bodies. Rev 6:9-11 seems to describe the spirits of the departed faithful as longing for that final clothing. In the interim they are not naked, but are clothed with the white robes until they receive their resurrection bodies. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

**5:4** *burdened.* Knowing that the eternal is yet to come, this temporal existence feels burdensome. (TLSB)

*be unclothed* – This is so because physical death is still painful. Paul is also repudiating Platonic philosophy, which had permeated much contemporary thought in his day, and which has affected our modern culture too. Plato taught that the body was a prison, and his goal was to free the soul from the confines of the body so it could join the realm of the pure and the ideal. This same basic idea has been responsible for Gnosticism, asceticism, hedonism, and other abuses of the body. The body itself is not the problem; it is human sin which has subjected the body and all the rest of God’s originally good creation to decay and death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

*what is mortal.* Our present mortal body. (CSB)

*swallowed up by life.* By our participation in the resurrection life of Jesus (4:10) our mortal being is swallowed up by life, not by death. Paul reverses the age-old imagery of death and the

grave being the great swallower (see Ps 69:15; Pr 1:12), as did Isaiah (see Isa 25:8; see also 1Co 15:54). (CSB)

Paul does not wish to do away with his temporal existence, for God has His purposes for all things. Rather, he earnestly prays that God swallow up his mortality with Christlike immortality in His time (cf 1Jn 3:2; 1Co 15:38, 44–47, 52–54). Irenaeus of Lyons: “We ought, after our calling, to be also adorned with works of righteousness, so that the Spirit of God may rest upon us; for this is the wedding garment” (ANF 1:517). (TLSB)

katapino This definition of swallow means to drink down in gulping fashion or to literally devour. The phrase is saying that eternal life is so strong that it simply overpowers anything in its way including earthly situations. (QV)

Here is a reversal of imagery. Instead of death and the grave swallowing their victims (Is.5:14; and Hab 2:5), Paul pictures life through Christ as the great swallower and victor, as also in 1 Cor. 15:54-57. (CSB)

5:5 *he...for this very thing* – In the word order of the Greek text the name of God is put into an emphatic position. So here: “It is God who has made us for this very purpose.” For what purpose? For that which Paul has stated in the previous verse: To be “clothed with our heavenly dwelling so that death may be swallowed up by life.” (PBC)

Only God could make this possible. This He has done by clothing Paul with Jesus’ righteousness, a righteousness earned for Paul by Christ through His perfect life and sacrificial death in his place. (PBC)

*God ... has given us the Spirit.*† The Holy Spirit, poured out by the risen and exalted Savior, applies by word and sacrament the benefits of Christ’s redeeming work to the believer’s heart and makes the resurrection power of Jesus a reality of his daily experience (cf. 4:14, 16). This guarantees his eventual total transformation into the likeness of Christ’s glorified body (Php 3:21). (CSB)

*guarantee.* A down payment or pledge assures that the whole is certain to come. (TLSB)

arrabona – Earnest money. The first installment or down payment that promises the remainder.

The word was used by Greek businessmen as the equivalent of our English “down payment,” of “deposit.” It was the first settlement of a total amount due and thus served as a pledge of more to come. (PBC)

Paul’s point is this: The presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is God’s personal guarantee of more to come. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God’s pledge that one day what is mortal, our earthly life, will be swallowed up by life, the eternal life that never ends. (PBC)

How does one know if he or she has been given the Spirit? To rely on feelings is not an accurate gauge, since feelings fluctuate. One day a person may feel that he has the Spirit; another day that feeling may not be there. It is far wiser to rely on the never-fluctuating promises of God. God’s Word says that if you have been baptized, you have received the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38). God’s Word also says that if the confession of your heart is “Jesus is Lord,” you have received

the Holy Spirit, for you cannot have made such a confession apart from the working of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). (PBC)

**5:6** *so* - Means now then. Usually when therefore is used it signals a change in emphasis. In this case it has to do with how we live while we look forward to eternal life.

*We know while we are at home* – *tharrountes* – Meaning to be of good cheer. This word makes the entire verse in Greek a dependent clause introducing the main clauses with finite verbs in verses 7-8. The longing for the future gives confident joy in the present. Because Christians know that God will furnish a body not made with human hands, we rejoice today in spite of afflictions. We will not lose heart. We are filled with courage. We are confident as we journey through life's conflicts because we know God is leading us from this temporary habitation to our eternal home. As with verse 1, we are like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness on our way to our true home of permanent rest. For Christians as sojourners in this world, cf. Heb 11:13-16; James 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

*at home in the body ... away from the Lord.* Still living here in our earthly tent-dwelling (v. 1); it does not mean that we are deprived of the Lord's spiritual presence with us in our daily pilgrimage. (CSB)

Christ is always with His people (Mt 18:20; 28:20). Here, Paul means away from the permanent, eternal reality of the new heavens and the new earth with the Lord (2Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1-7, 22-23). (TLSB)

**5:7** We trust in God's promises, not in what we see with our eyes. Augustine: "Whoever takes another meaning out of Scripture than the writer intended, goes astray.... Faith will totter if the authority of Scripture begin[s] to shake. And then, if faith totter[s], love itself will grow cold. For if a man has fallen from faith, he must necessarily also fall from love; for he cannot love what he does not believe to exist" (NPNF 1 2:533). (TLSB)

*walk by faith* – *pistis* To be convinced that something not even visible will be true such as trusting Jesus for our salvation. (QV)

While we go about our daily walk in life, we do not see the future with 20/20 vision, but we have 20/20 faith. This verse summarizes the theology of the cross versus the theology of glory. The confidence and hope that is the content of this text is based entirely on faith, none of it can be perceived by sight now. Even though Paul was an eyewitness of the risen Christ, he too had to walk by faith, not sight. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

**5:8** *away from the body ... at home with the Lord.*† The situation of the Christian after death, when he is no longer living in his "earthly tent" (i.e., his body) but is in the immediate presence of the Lord. (CSB)

Death divides body from spirit but not from the Lord. (TLSB)

Christians look forward to their life with Christ. Paul says it well in Philippians 1:21 “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (CSB)

If it is a blessed experience to be able to live now by faith, how much more blessed will it be to live forever then by sight. The apostle John expresses this thought in his First Epistle: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). (PBC)

**5:9** *our aim*. This is something you strive for with all the energy you can generate. (QV)

*please Him*. In view of Jesus’ great mercy to us, the goal of this life is to live to honor to Him (cf Rm 12:1) as we serve others in His name. (TLSB)

philotimoumetha – To be ambitious or zealous for a cause. We should always make it our aim to please God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

1 Thessalonians 4:11 “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you.”

The Christian life is not a matter of rules and regulations. It is rather a joyful response to the gospel that frees and gives life, a response that says, “Lord, I am available. Use me, in life and in death, in such a way that Jesus is praised.” (PBC)

*rather be away from the body and home with the Lord*. Whether we will be alive or will have already died at his coming. (CSB)

**5:10** *appear before the judgment seat of Christ*. This accounting has nothing to do with justification, which is credited to the Christian fully and forever through faith in Christ; instead, it refers to what we have done with our lives as Christians (cf. 1Co 3:11–15). (CSB)

At the final judgment, Jesus will personally judge the living and the dead (Ac 17:31; 2Tm 4:1). This is the day of the Lord, when all people will stand before His throne (1Co 1:8; 2Co 1:14; 2Pt 3:10). (TLSB)

*may receive what is due* – Not works-righteousness, for all are dead in sin without Christ and saved by grace alone (Eph 2:8–9; Rm 2:11–16; 3:9–20). Paul means what is due by faith, namely, that we are righteous through Christ alone, for God works through us (Eph 2:10). God’s grace is so abundant that even the works He graciously provides, He rewards. Conversely, those who do not believe in Jesus will stand before Christ and be judged by their works. “By God’s help, we will retain this Confession to our last breath, when we shall go forth from this life to the heavenly fatherland, to appear with a joyful, undaunted mind and a pure conscience before the court of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, *Concordia*, 16). (TLSB)

*has done in the body*. Although the body is wasting away, we are responsible for our actions while in it. Non-Christians, too, are morally responsible and liable to God’s judgment (see Ro 2:5, 16), but Paul has believers in mind here. (CSB)

At the judgment seat of Christ one will receive either good or bad, not because of, but in accordance with what he has done in the body. The cause of eternal life is not one's works, but the Christ before whose judgment seat we will stand. (PBC)

**5:1–10** Paul simply instructs the believer to please God. We, even as Christians, often live to please others and to please ourselves, neglecting the one thing that makes life worth living—pleasing Christ. Paul calls us to get our priorities straight. To please Christ is to trust in His word of grace for us. His grace, His forgiveness, His gift of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit assures us that nothing in this world can separate us from God, and that Judgment Day will be a day of celebration for those who put their trust in Him. • Dear Lord, impress upon my heart the greatness of Your grace to me, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that I can walk confidently by faith until I see You gloriously face-to-face. Amen. (TLSB)

### *The Ministry of Reconciliation*

**11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

**5:11** *to fear the Lord.* As the one to whom we are accountable (v. 10). (CSB)

Judgment Day brings all things to light. But Paul and all believers are already known by God (1Co 8:3; Gal 4:9). (TLSB)

When he thinks of that day, he is filled with a holy awe and reverence for the Christ who will come again as Judge. That awe and reverence for Christ, fearing the Lord, as he puts it here, leads him to desire to conduct himself in a way that pleases his Lord. (PBC)

*we try to persuade men.* Paul needs to persuade some members of the Corinthian church that he, not any of the false teachers who have invaded their ranks, is their authentic apostle. (CSB)

In the original Greek the verb “persuade” is in the present sense, which has the idea of ongoing action. Paul kept on persuading people with the gospel, the powerful means by which the Holy Spirit touches people's hearts. (PBC)



With Paul, Christians today want to share the gospel with those who do not yet know Christ. These words serve as an encouragement to be both persuasive and persistent in this endeavor. (PBC)

*it is known* – Paul’s hope is that deep down in their conscience, a conscience touched by Paul’s preaching of law and gospel, the Corinthians will recognize that Paul has been open and transparent in his dealings with them, that he has nothing to hide. (PBC)

*conscience*. Paul is open and transparent not only to the Lord’s judgment but also to the Corinthians’ judgment of him. (TLSB)

**5:12** *we are not commending ourselves*. The pretension of the false apostles is a superficial front; their concern is not with spirituality that is true and deep, but with money and popularity and self-importance. (CSB)

False teachers boasted of themselves (their outward appearance of spiritual strength), leading the Corinthian congregation away from the Lord as they despised God’s ministry through Paul (10:12; 11:1–13). (TLSB)

They should understand that Paul’s adversaries were touching only external things in their complaints about him. They take pride in [literally, “boast about”] what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. Later Paul will discuss this matter in more detail. He will describe, for example, how the “super-apostles” boasted of their heritage, that they were descendants of Abraham (cf. 11:22-23). They also bragged that they were much better public speakers than Paul (cf. 11:6). (PBC)

But that, obviously, is not what really counts. What is in the heart determines the true worth of a minister of Christ. Paul’s hope is that his speech and conduct have made it clear that in his heart was a true fear of the Lord and a genuine desire to serve the Corinthians. (PBC)

**5:13** *beside ourselves...in our right mind*. Probably Paul’s enemies were asserting that he was suffering from religious mania, pointing perhaps to the sensational conversion he claimed to have experienced on the road to Damascus and to what they regarded as his insane way of life. If this is to be out of his mind, Paul does not deny it, for this whole letter shows how willingly and joyfully he endured affliction for the gospel (cf. 12:10). That, however, was essentially a matter between him and God. On the other hand, there was nothing that could be called eccentric about his manner of presenting the gospel to the Corinthians, for in this he had been, and continued to be, sensible and sober-minded, avoiding flowery rhetoric and all forms of sensationalism (cf. 1Co 2:1–5). (CSB)

False teachers claimed that Paul was crazy. An apostle must be willing to be a “fool” for Christ (cf 1Co 4:9–13). (TLSB)

Some years before this, Jesus’ unbelieving relatives had exclaimed, as they observed Him working such long hours that He couldn’t even find time to eat, “He is out of His mind” (Mark 3:21). It is likely that Paul is referring here to something similar. Paul toiled and labored day and night. For the sake of the gospel he permitted himself to be exposed again and again to ridicule, mockery, beatings, stonings, imprisonment (cf 2 Cor. 11:23-29). Such tireless zeal could easily have led Paul’s detractor to charge him with being a religious fanatic. (PBC)

*for you*. To the Corinthians, Paul spoke clearly and directly (cf 1Co 1:17, 2:4). (TLSB)

**5:14** *love of Christ*. As shown in his death for us, though some hold that the meaning here is “our love for Christ.” (CSB)

The source and motivation for Paul’s ministry to the Corinthians. (TLSB)

*controls us* – *sunechao* This has the concept of compressing something and doing so by an irresistible outside force. (QV)

This explains the phrase in verse 13, “are out of our mind.” Some people would say it is what makes us tick. For Paul it is the foundation for his selfless devotion to preaching Christ. It motivated him through physical and spiritual weakness, pain, suffering, and disappointment, all the way through the day of his martyrdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

*one*. The incarnate Son. (CSB)

*for all*. For all mankind. (CSB)

*therefore all have died*.† Because Christ died for all, he involved all in his death. For some his death would confirm their own death, but for others (those who through faith would become united with him) his death was their death to sin and self, so that they now live in and with the resurrected Christ (v. 15). However, some hold that Paul is not speaking specifically here about the scope of Christ’s atonement but about the effect of Christ’s death on the Christian life. Then “all” would refer not to mankind in general but only to the church. (CSB)

When Jesus died on the cross, as the sinless Son of God, all who ever lived or would live were connected to His death. As God in the flesh, He took the punishment for all sinners upon Himself (v 21; Rm 5:6–8). St. Bernard of Clairvaux : “It was man who owed the debt, it was man who paid it.... The Head, therefore, satisfied for [its] members, Christ for His children” (SLSB, p 280). (TLSB)

**5:15** *no longer live for themselves* – God’s love elicits a response. The following texts express that thought.

Luke 20:38 “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

Romans 6:11 “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

True life is life with a new motive ... We cease to live for ourselves, our own interest, advantage, or success, and to begin to live for Him. Our object is to be used by Him in His work of redemption, and in the fulfillment through fellowship with Him of the purpose of God. It is often objected that there is no difference between Christians and non-Christians. There ought to be. The difference may not show itself in outward actions or habits. The non-Christian may do his

work, or care for his family as the Christian. The real difference will be in motive. The motive for the Christian is the love of Christ. Whatever he does, he does for Christ. (IB)

**5:16** *we regard no one according to the flesh* – Paul would not approach people from the world’s point of view but from God’s. (TLSB)

*we once regarded Christ in this way.* Paul is admitting that before his conversion he held views of Christ that were “worldly” (lit. “according to the flesh”)—based on purely human considerations. (CSB)

Paul had previously thought of Jesus as a mere man. He foolishly rejected Christ and persecuted His Church. (TLSB)

This verse expands on the awesomely powerful influence of the risen Christ on Paul. As a persecutor, Saul was the opposite of an ambassador since he reasoned “according to the flesh” and considered Jesus to be a false messiah. Now that he has heard the Word (from Christ Himself!) and has been baptized, Paul is enlightened by the Spirit so he can see Jesus as He truly is: God’s Messiah. In this faith Paul lives his life, laboring with all his intellect and strength for the Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

**5:17** *in Christ.* United with Christ through faith in him and commitment to him. (CSB)

*new creation.* Redemption is the restoration and fulfillment of God’s purposes in creation (see note on 4:6), and this takes place in Christ, through whom all things were made (see Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2) and in whom all things are restored or created anew (cf. Ro 8:18–23; Eph 2:10). (CSB)

God has redeemed and restored the believer into a new sphere of existence, re-created as a person of faith in Jesus Christ who desires to live in and for Him alone (cf Rm 8:18–23; Eph 2:10). (TLSB)

*the old has passed away* – In Christ, the things of the sinful flesh have died (cf v 14). The believer is under the lordship of Christ. (TLSB)

The one who is in Christ is the person who by faith had made the death and resurrection of Christ his or her own. God no longer sees the old, pre-Christ person. That, says Paul, has gone, and a new person has come. The word translated has come has in it the idea of something that started in the past and continues to be a new creation in the eyes of God. (PBC)

Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

John 1:13 “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

**5:18** *All this is from God.* God takes the initiative in redemption (see Ro 5:8; Jn 3:16), and he sustains it and brings it to completion. (CSB)

Chrysostom says, “Nothing of ourselves. For remission of sins and adoption and unspeakable glory are given to us by Him.” (NPNF1 12:332) (TLSB)

*reconciled* – All people are alienated and cut off from God because of sin and rebellion. Christ’s death on the cross bridges that eternal gap by paying sinful humanity’s just punishment. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection not only redeemed us but also restored us to fellowship with Him (Col. 1:22). “God’s precepts, and God’s true service, are hidden when people hear that only monks are in a state of perfection. True Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, to have great faith, and to trust that for Christ’s sake we have a God who has been reconciled (2 Cor. 5:18-19). It means to ask for and expect from God His help in all things with confident assurance that are to live according to our calling in life, being diligent in outward good works, serving in our calling. This is where true perfection and true service of God is to be found” (AC XXVII 49-50). (TLSB)

Reconciliation is the removal of the barrier, caused by sin, between God and humanity. Christ’s death on the cross for the sin of the world is the way this barrier was removed. An individual appropriates the forgiveness earned by Christ for himself by grace through faith. (Rom 5:11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:16) (The Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

*ministry of reconciliation.* We who are the recipients of divine reconciliation have the privilege and obligation of now being, like Paul in a sense, the heralds and instruments in God’s hands to minister the message of reconciliation throughout the world (v. 19). (CSB)

The apostolic ministry extends the benefits of Christ’s reconciling work (cf John 20:21; Mt. 28:18-20) to individuals, so that when Paul pleads for them to believe in Jesus, it is God’s appeal. As recipients of that grace, God has also called all those who believe to be witnesses of God’s gracious restoration to those who do not yet know Him (cf. 4:15). (TLSB)

**5:19** *reconciling the world.*† When the Savior died, God’s justice was satisfied. His anger was appeased. God was reconciled to the whole world. This does not mean, however, that all the world has received the benefits of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The sinner enjoys peace with God only when he comes to faith. (CSB)

Through Christ’s death, God’s eternal justice was appeased and the whole world was reconciled to Him. Faith receives Christ’s work personally. Unbelief, though rejects its. (TLSB)

*to himself* – The divinity and humanity of Jesus, though united, remain distinct. “The divine essence is not changed into the human nature. But the two natures, unchanged, are personally united” (FC SD VII 36) (TLSB)

*entrusting to us the message of reconciliation* – The apostolic ministry is God’s gift to deliver His gracious benefits of forgiveness, life and salvation through Word and Sacrament (cf. Eph 4:11-15; Mt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-29). (TLSB)

**5:20** *ambassadors* – Representatives who speak on behalf of the heads of states/countries possess the authority of the one who sends them. The Corinthians then, in challenging Paul’s ambassadorship to them, were in reality challenging Jesus. (TLSB)

**5:21** *made him to be sin who knew no sin*. A summary of the gospel and its logic. Christ, the only entirely righteous one, at Calvary took our sin upon himself and endured the punishment we deserved, namely, death and separation from God. Thus, by a marvelous exchange, he made it possible for us to receive his righteousness and thereby be reconciled to God. Our standing and our acceptance before God are solely in him (cf. 1Co 1:30). Again, all this is God’s doing; all this is freely available to us because of the initiative of divine grace. (CSB)

Jesus took upon Himself our status and standing before God’s righteous court. He was declared guilty of all the sin and evil in this world. *knew no sin*. Mankind’s sins were charged to the account of an innocent man (cf Is 53:6). (TLSB)

*become the righteousness of God* – “Christ alone is our Righteousness, who is true God and man, because in Him the divine and the human natures are personally united with each other” (FC Ep III 1). (TLSB)